

accordance with the plain facts of history and the Bible viewed critically and philosophically.

From the Subject Index of the Oxford Bible Helps one might gain the idea that the conception of God differentiated into the persons Father, Son and Holy Spirit, was prevalent in the Old Testament. But every reference to such a distinction as was made by Jesus, other than an indefinite and undeveloped idea of the different personalities of God is far-fetched and beyond the thought of those who wrote the prophecies, songs and laws of that time. Nothing is more apparent to the student of the Bible, if he studies it in the light of history and reason, than that God's revelation of himself was, and of necessity, because of human ignorance, must be a progressive revelation. The first sentence of the Epistle to the Hebrews, "God who in many portions (*polumeros*) and many ways (*polutropos*) spoke in times past unto the fathers by the prophets, hath in these last days spoken unto us by his Son," is a vivid and true description of God's plan of revelation of his will and nature to us. The fact is that the idea of three persons in the god-head was a development of Christ himself, and only vaguely and unconsciously referred to by the Old Testament writers. This does not deny the fact that Christ is in the Old Testament, but it does deny that to those bards and seers he was a definite person, clearly and distinctly *the* Son of God, as we now understand him to have been. To them he was simply a somebody who would be anointed of God to "make for righteousness" and to redeem Israel from her sins by a sacrificial life. And while Isaiah, that most far-sighted of all the prophets, that John the Baptist, nay more, that political Christ of his time so vividly described the deliverer of Israel, yet there can be no doubt that we looking back at those words in the light of history and of their fulfillment in Christ, have read into them more definiteness than ever existed in Isaiah's mind regarding that mysterious somebody who should come in fulness of time to deliver God's people from their sin and shame. But with Christ originated and by him and his apostles was developed the idea of Father, Son and Holy Spirit as constituting God.

Perhaps some may ask, if God spent so much time in rooting the idea of one God in human thought, why did he now in Christ put forth the idea of three persons in that God?

Simply, because the conception of one God was a necessary preconception of one God composed of three persons. That there was a practical, an ethical

reason for the revelation of the Trinity to human thought, will appear as we proceed.

By the Jews God had never been thought of as a loving father. He had always seemed to them an ineffable being, shaking Mt. Sinai with the thunder of his power, striking sinners with the lightning of his fierce anger, or sending foreign kings to punish them for their disobedience by a captivity and humiliation worse than death. To them he was a judge, with whom they had a legal contract, the violation of which brought punishment. Hence, when Jesus called God, father and revealed in himself the sympathetic, loving qualities of God towards the oppressed and repentant sinners, he revealed a quality of godliness never before dreamed of, and which they did not believe was godliness. This is shown by the offense he gave the Jews when he loved the penitent, no matter what its past history. It is true also that Jesus showed fearful indignation, but it was because he loved so much. The conception of God as the loving father of the penitent prostitute was foreign to a Jew's mode of thinking. A Jew had always thought of God as the Almighty sitting "on the circle of heavens" and executing justice. They had never learned that God is a loving father as well as a just judge. By words, by manner of life and by parable, he taught it. He made provision for its perpetuation by incorporating it into the words, by which men are symbolically inducted into the number of his disciples.

Another doctrine Jesus came to reveal was the sonship of men to God and the fellowship of men with men.

Jesus was not only the revelation of what God is in his nature everywhere and always, but also of what mankind potentially is by faith in God. The Jews mistaking their call thought God meant to save them alone. Jesus came to declare the fallacy of such a selfish thought, and to show that all men are brothers. This he did by words and life. He consorted equally with the rich and poor, the religious zealot and the publican, the Pharisee and the sinner. This he came to teach humanity, and one of his ways was by baptizing men in the name of the Son. When men are baptized into Christ, they are supposed to put on Christ. They come into filial relation with the Father, to whom they have been prodigal. They recognize their brotherhood with Christ and thereby with man. Hitherto they have been denying these two truths. Now they accept these Christ revealed facts and live thereby.

But Jesus also revealed the existence of the Holy Spirit as comforter and guide.

This also was hitherto a dormant idea. The words of some of the disciples of John the Baptist, when questioned by Paul, as to whether they had received the Holy Ghost since baptism, "We have not so much as heard whether there be any Holy Ghost," Acts 19; 2, shows the state of opinion among the Jews in regard to this important person of the godhead.

Jesus saw that the time had come when men should realize that they need not trust in their own wisdom, but in the spirit of God. Hitherto men had thought of God as far removed from man, but now they should realize that "he is not far from every one of us." This abiding presence of God Jesus revealed in his life and prepared the means for its continual recurrence to men's minds every time a sinner enters the church, by a baptism in the name of the Holy Ghost.

We thus see the necessity at that time of the revelation of God consisting of three persons, and how trine immersion taught the significance of that revelation as they entered the fold. Is there no necessity of such teaching to-day? Does the Gospel find men to-day in real possession of the idea of God's fatherhood? Does the world at large believe that God loves men as a parent loves his children? Has the church that bears Christ's name shown by its conduct that it believes in the fatherhood of God? Has it not rather to a woeful degree the selfish idea of the Jews that God wishes to save it alone? Do men show to-day that they are in possession of the idea of the brotherhood of man? If so, what mean these class distinctions between rich and poor, learned and ignorant? What means the fierce spirit of hatred, in many cases existing between employer and employees, the spirit of indifference and scorn felt by the rich, the learned, the socially respectable, towards the poor, the ignorant and the moral lepers of our common humanity? Do not men need some strongly asserted, vividly portrayed baptism, "in the name of the Father, and of the Son and of the Holy Ghost," to make them realize the meaning of the word incarnate in human flesh and the significance of Christian baptism?

Nothing so clearly and forcibly draws attention to God as a father, to the sonship and brotherhood of man and to the abiding power of the Holy Spirit as Guide and Comforter as trine immersion.

Has man ever improved on Christ's methods of teaching? Does the history of the church show that in all the centuries of moral darkness, depravity, apostasy from God, but no improvement on the simple godliness of Jesus, nor his methods of work. Why then in this age of